



February 2026

Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 Evaluation and close out report

Background

The Wyndham area is one of the fastest growing communities in Australia and was home to over 300,000 residents in 2025 and will likely reach 500,000 by 2040, bigger than Canberra's current population. This growth creates many opportunities but continues to place significant pressure on existing infrastructure and services.

To address the growth for services and infrastructure, Wyndham City Council actively advocates to the State and Federal Governments to build partnership.

In 2024, Council undertook a process of building transparency around this advocacy work, which led to the formation of the award-winning Advocacy Strategy 2024-26.

The Wyndham Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 was developed to strengthen the planning, implementation, coordination and efficiency of Council's advocacy activities to maximise success and deliver better outcomes for the Wyndham Community.

The strategy provided a framework for assessing advocacy issues and opportunities in a way that was community focused and evidence based. Principally, the delivery of the Strategy sought to promote accountability and transparency in Council's advocacy to State and Federal Governments.

In delivering the Advocacy Strategy, Wyndham City Council has been guided by the annual actions identified within the Strategy.

As part of the endorsement of the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26, Council committed to a full review at the conclusion of the Strategy's lifespan. This purpose of this report is to examine all the advocacy activities conducted under the strategy, the effectiveness of these activities, what outcomes were achieved, and identify how advocacy can be improved.

Outcomes and Results

The evaluation of the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 has been undertaken across the following aspects.

1. Utilisation of the Advocacy Strategy in undertaking advocacy

The development of a Wyndham Advocacy Framework as part of this strategy, sought to:

- Set Wyndham City Council's advocacy agenda and priorities.
- Identify and build strong strategic relationships with stakeholders.
- Influence decision makers to improve outcomes for the Wyndham community.
- Secure funding for Council projects and services.
- Build community trust and confidence in Council and its activities

The Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 incorporated a new process to prioritise Wyndham's key projects and policies being brought to government, through the application of a prioritisation matrix's scoring system.

During the life of the Advocacy Strategy, this assisted Council to prioritise individual items and areas of focus against Council priorities, a consistent framework in determining advocacy actions.

The establishment of the framework via the Advocacy Strategy also sought to maintain a consistent narrative when advocating a position in the many forums and meetings Councillors and staff attend, and all representations to State and Federal Governments.

This was an improvement to the ad hoc nature of undertaking advocacy in the past.

Council has been guided by the Strategy in responding to a number of critical events and opportunities in the annual Advocacy calendar.

Werribee By-Election, 8 February 2025

The Werribee by-election was the result of the resignation of Treasurer of Victoria and Member for Werribee, Tim Pallas and represented a critical advocacy event for Wyndham City Council. This by-election in Werribee, variously described in some media outlets as 'Labor heartland', was expected to be a highly contested election as a result of recent polling.

Council produced a 'Werribee Votes 2025' campaign, including a prospectus document of priorities sourced through the prioritisation matrix. Council's CEO and Mayor offered an invitation to meet with the candidates, from across the political spectrum to ensure our adherence to the 'Apolitical' guiding advocacy principle.

As part of our 'Community centred' guiding principle where 'We communicate about our advocacy activities in an open and accessible way,' Council worked to increase community awareness of the by-election given its advent during the busy Summer holiday period. Council held the 'Werribee Votes 2025' forum on January 29 2025, providing all candidates with an opportunity to answer questions and talk about their priorities and plans for the future of Werribee. With 12 candidates standing at the close of nominations, Council was pleased that 10 candidates accepted this invitation. This was livestreamed exclusively on Facebook and YouTube, with 11.9k and 785 views respectively.

At the Werribee by-election, the successful Labor candidate, announced \$333 million towards the Werribee Main Road Interchange Upgrade and the Ballan Road Intersection Upgrade.

Federal Election, 3 May 2025

Council worked to deliver a bipartisan engagement with all candidates as part of the formal election campaign. This included the development of prospectus documents, designed for distribution to candidates across the electorates, with Council's key priorities.

These priorities were a range of City-shaping infrastructure projects that aimed to enhance the liveability of Wyndham City. As part of Council's proactive effort to support understanding around elections in the community, and Council's guiding principle to be apolitical, Council also offered candidates the opportunity to answer a questionnaire relating to the priorities. Their responses were placed on Council's advocacy website and shared via social media.

At the Federal Election, the successful Labor candidates for Lalor and Gellibrand committed:

- \$85 million for the Wyndham Ring Road (formerly Westlink Stage 2)
- \$5 million for Soldiers Reserve pavilion
- \$5 million for Saltwater Reserve pavilion

Annual Budget Bid Processes

Annually, Council produces a list of budget priorities to advocate for inclusion within the State and Federal Budgets. Utilising the prioritisation matrix supported the identification of projects for the budget bid processes for the Victorian State Budget 2025/26 and upcoming 2026/27, as well as the corresponding Federal Budgets.

In the Victorian Budget 2025/26, the State Government committed:

- \$114 million staged operational funding for the Wyndham Law Courts
- New bus routes connecting the West including Route 186 between Tarneit Station and West Tarneit Station, and Route 140 between Rockbank Station and Tarneit Station
- Hogans Road Reserve Scoreboard Upgrade
- Manor Lakes Community Learning Centre – Outdoor Youth Space

The Federal Budget 2025/26 committed:

- \$3.5 million for a business case to upgrade Point Cook Road between Jamieson Way and Dunnings Road
- To the delivery of the commitments made during the Federal Election

Advocacy Plans

As per the requirement of the endorsed Strategy, Advocacy Plans have also been developed and delivered for all advocacy priorities. These have included Backgrounds on projects, stakeholder assessment, risk analysis and the matrix's scoring for each project.

Advocacy Plans guide internal Council teams and allow the opportunity to gain detailed histories and understanding of projects and policies. They have been utilised for the media team in responding to enquiries, and for the development of election prospectus documents, and budget bid proposals.

These plans further ensured that the risk of 'Failure to monitor advocacy efforts' identified in the strategy has been addressed.

It is recommended that the prioritisation matrix established by the Advocacy Strategy be reworked, retaining the key criterion markers (Economic impact, Government alignment, Community impact, Regional impact and Distinctiveness), but adding more tangible scoring metrics. For example, Community Impact should be amended to give different scoring to the number of impacted residents for each project, with the more residents impacted, the higher the score.

Through the previous matrix, many priorities have been similarly scored. By making some changes, it will ensure that the matrix provides an opportunity to better reflect Council's vision and resource-capacity in the higher ranked priorities, and to create a more defined eventual priorities list. Additionally, an updated matrix will further reduce likely risk impacts identified in the previous strategy including:

- Council priorities not matching the communities' aspirations and concerns,
- Perception of political bias,
- Advocacy activities that do not match State or Federal Government priorities.

2. Action Plan

The Advocacy Strategy was supported by a four-year action plan, which committed the Council to the same actions each year over the life of the strategy.

During the life of the Strategy, the Council's Advocacy and Governmental Relations service underwent a restructure, and the bulk of the actions have now become business as usual deliverables for the service.

This means that going forward an annual workplan and well-defined deliverables within the service's service catalogue is all that will be needed; rather than standalone action plans.

Please see Attached Appendix A, for further detail on what was achieved by the Action Plan.

The above two aspects of the Advocacy Strategy have resulted in improving Council's advocacy practice. However, given that advocacy is an evolving body of work, with the need to often respond to changing political and economic conditions, this constitutes a Framework as opposed to a Strategy. As a result, it is recommended that going forward that an Advocacy Strategy and action plan is not redeveloped but instead, that an Advocacy Framework is developed, and regularly reviewed as a standalone internal Council document, to guide the deliverables of the Advocacy and Government Relations service.

Stakeholders and Partners

In honouring the Advocacy Strategy's commitment to partnership, Council has continued to work closely with local Members of Parliament and Regional Membership Organisations.

Members of Parliament

Council has provided local MPs and their offices with support for constituent enquiries and issues on Council matters. Council also meets with Members of Parliament on a regular basis and has provided information sessions on particular projects.

Regional Membership Organisations

Wyndham City Council has continued to engage regularly with our regional partners, LeadWest, National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), Outer Melbourne Councils (OMC), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and other regional Councils.

These strategic membership organisations have provided Council with the opportunity to advance key election priorities through collective engagement, particularly with the Federal Election 2025 and the upcoming Victorian Election 2026. These also honour the Advocacy Strategy's commitment to building collective partnership for advocacy.

Council regularly reviews our Strategic memberships to ensure ongoing value for money and alignment with the values and priorities of Wyndham City Council.

Council has attended NGAA's Annual Awards 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2025, and was successful with a 'Highly Commended' for our Connecting Wyndham program. At the previous awards, Wyndham City Council won the Advocacy Award for the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26.

Council also attends the biannual MAV State Councils and the annual ALGA National General Assembly.

Council has maintained regular dialogue with neighbouring Councils. In 2025, Wyndham City Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Geelong City Council.

Future Wyndham panel

The Future Wyndham initiative was a deliberative community engagement process led by Wyndham City Council in early 2025 to refresh the long-term Community Vision for Wyndham to 2050 and to establish community-driven priorities to guide strategic planning, resource allocation and advocacy activities.

Through its deliberations, the panel recognised many of the most critical issues facing Wyndham, including major transport infrastructure, health and education services, employment access and regional connectivity, require advocacy and investment from other tiers of government.

As such, the panel's work delivers additional guidance around Council's advocacy into the future.

Alignment to Council Plan and priorities

Over the life of the Advocacy Strategy, the Wyndham 2040 vision offered direction for the organisation in delivering for the community into the short and long term. Wyndham City Council's 2040 Vision community statement:

"A safe, connected and inclusive community. We respect, acknowledge, value and celebrate the First Nations people, our heritage, cultural diversity and multicultural strengths. Our community has the infrastructure and services it needs to support holistic health and wellbeing for all. Local employment and education facilities are plentiful, and there are a variety of recreational, leisure, tourism, art and cultural opportunities for everyone to experience throughout the municipality. We preserve our natural environment and rural lifestyle; we are able to get around easily and get to where we want to go efficiently. We are self-sufficient and pride ourselves on being green and sustainable."

As part of Strategic Area 7 of the Council Plan, Wyndham City Council committed to residents that Council would 'Ensure the needs of the community are well represented through effective advocacy and strong collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders and all levels of Government.'

As demonstrated within the 'Outcomes and Results' and the 'Stakeholders and Partners' components of this report, Council has been proactive in responding to multiple advocacy opportunities throughout the life of the strategy and has significantly improved its efforts to build strong partnerships in pursuit of common goals with elected representatives.

During the life of the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26, the Community Vision and Council Plan was renewed following the Wyndham City Council election in November 2024. This was developed with the support of the Future Wyndham panel.

An updated Advocacy Framework will need to ensure consideration towards the renewed Wyndham 2050 vision which has a range of priorities that require advocacy. As informed by the Vision priorities, the Council Plan 2025-29 also has a key objective under Strategic Area 4 to 'ensure that the needs of the community are well represented through effective community engagement and advocacy practices that focus on improved transport connections, local job opportunities, safer communities and better health services'

Cost of Implementation

The Wyndham Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 was delivered within the service's operational budget.

However, during the life of the Strategy, the broader advocacy function within Council was able to deliver staff efficiencies, as part of an effort of return the Council 'back to black.' This has meant an overall reduction to the operational budget of \$112,509.38 going forward.

Moving forward, the Advocacy and Government Relations service will hold responsibility for the annual payment of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, and has recently additionally added a new Senior Grants and Funding Advisor in order to secure additional funding for Council, in line with Council's strategic direction to ensure financial sustainability.

Recommendations / Next Steps

The Wyndham Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 represented a new way of coordinating government advocacy, and reorganised priorities to ensure Council appropriated time and resourcing towards projects best aligned with the Council Plan and 2040 Vision. It also promoted transparency around this work for the benefit of the community.

This represented a significant change from how advocacy was undertaken previously; in an unstructured ad hoc way.

The strategy established for the first time a framework (and supporting scoring system) for assessing the priority of advocacy issues and opportunities in a way that was community focused, and evidence based. This was developed in order to assist Council to prioritise individual items and areas of focus against Council priorities, while also providing a consistent framework for determining advocacy actions. The Advocacy Plans also sought to provide a consistent narrative when advocating Council's position in forums and meetings attended by Councillors and staff, and other representations to government.

This framework has proven instrumental to guiding the deliverables of the Advocacy and Government Relations service.

Given that advocacy is an evolving body of work, with the need to often respond to changing political and economic conditions, it is recommended that an Advocacy Strategy and action plan is not redeveloped, rather that the framework is reviewed, updated and improved to guide the deliverables of the Advocacy and Government Relations service going forward, as a standalone internal Council document.

As part of the framework, it is also recommended that the prioritisation matrix is reworked to develop greater clarity around key priorities, ensuring those are best aligned with the Wyndham 2050 Vision, and Council's ongoing political and economic conditions.

Communication of outcomes to community

The evaluation of the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26 will be included within the Wyndham City Council Annual Report 2025-26. To ensure transparency and accountability, it will also be presented on the Advocacy website page.

Appendix A

Advocacy Strategy Action Plan

Action	Status	Evaluation comment
Year one 2023/24		
Develop an advocacy toolkit, to empower community to support and community members to deliver grassroots advocacy efforts.	Ongoing	Wyndham City Council will be launching a toolkit as part of Council's campaign for the Victorian Election 2026. This will ensure that residents can proactively engage and support Council's advocacy as part of Wyndham's campaign 'A Way Forward for Wyndham'.
Assess all outstanding advocacy priorities with the advocacy prioritisation framework and prioritisation matrix.	Ongoing	All Council priorities, including those delivered through Notices of Motion, the Council Plan, and Council Budget Processes have been assessed through the Council-endorsed Prioritisation Matrix. As new priorities are identified, these will be put through this process.
Develop standalone advocacy plans for all outstanding priorities, mapping out key partnerships, stakeholders, influencers and decision makers, key messages, and clear actions.	Ongoing	<p>As per the requirement of the endorsed Strategy, Advocacy Plans have also been developed and delivered for all assessed advocacy priorities. These have included Backgrounds on projects, stakeholder assessment, risk analysis and the matrix's scoring for each project.</p> <p>The Advocacy Plans guide internal Council teams and allow the opportunity to gain detailed histories and understanding of projects and policies. They have been utilised for the media team in responding to enquiries, and for the development of election prospectus documents, and budget bid proposals.</p> <p>These plans further ensured that the risk of 'Failure to monitor advocacy efforts' identified in the previous strategy is negated.</p>
Contribute to and influence strategic direction of LeadWest through taking an active role in advocacy efforts.	Ongoing	Council attends LeadWest's monthly advocacy meetings with advocacy officers across the West of Melbourne. Council has also contributed towards LeadWest's

		campaign document for the Victorian Election 2026. Council continues to attend and occasionally host LeadWest committee meetings.
Develop a stakeholder matrix, identifying key stakeholders and relationships held across the organisation, to ensure a more coordinated and unified approach to other tiers of government, key influencers and decision makers.	Completed	Taking the Stakeholder Matrix contained as part of the Advocacy Strategy 2024-26, Council has worked to install Customer Relationship Management software as part of an effort to improve stakeholder relationships. This software will embed relationship understanding across the organisation and ensure a unified approach to engagement with Government stakeholders.
Identify new stakeholders and form partnerships to help advance Wyndham's position and advocacy efforts.	Ongoing	Council regularly attends regional partnership meetings and looks to build partnership, existing and new, where possible. In 2025, Wyndham City Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with City of Greater Geelong.
Implement a stakeholder relations platform to support advocacy efforts, reduce duplication, and ensure all relevant stakeholders have access to up-to-date information on shared priorities.	Completed	Wyndham City Council has recently rolled out the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system to ensure consistency of engagement with stakeholders. Council has signed a contract with the company, Simply Stakeholders. This ensures relevant information about stakeholders is up to date and prevents unnecessary duplication of work or requests from external stakeholders. It also embeds organizational understanding of these partnerships.
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	Wyndham City Council supports the strategic direction of the MAV by submitting motions into the biannual State Council meetings. Motions that are carried at State Council become resolutions. These resolutions are then considered by the MAV Board when implementing the strategic workplan for the MAV. Council also attends both annual State Council meetings to vote on motions from other Councils.
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	Wyndham City Council attends NGAA's monthly advocacy meetings with advocacy officers across the West of

		<p>Melbourne. Council has also contributed data and information towards NGAA's recent document, 'Beyond Bricks: Delivering the housing we need sooner in Australia's Growth Areas.'</p> <p>Council attends the annual NGAA awards evening in Canberra. Wyndham City Council was successful in receiving the 'Highly Commended' Award for the 'Connecting Wyndham' transport program as part of the Transformative Infrastructure Delivery category.</p>
Engage with State representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	Wyndham City Council meets with State Representatives on a frequent basis. However, the frequency can vary according to each individual MP's interest and issues relevancy. This has produced a context where meetings can occur more than bi-monthly, and occasionally less.
Engage with Federal representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	Wyndham City Council meets with Federal Representatives on a frequent basis. However, the frequency can vary according to each individual MP's interest and issues relevancy. This has produced a context where meetings can occur more than bi-monthly, and occasionally less.
Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.	Ongoing	Annually, Council produces a list of budget priorities to advocate for inclusion within the State and Federal Budgets. Utilising the prioritisation matrix supported the identification of projects for the budget bid processes for the Victorian State Budget 2025/26, as well as the corresponding Federal Budgets.
Identify and support application of State and Federal grants to support delivery of infrastructure and services.	Ongoing	As part of the strategic direction to ensure financial sustainability and return Council 'back to black', Council has recently added a new Senior Grants and Funding Advisor to secure additional funding for projects within the municipality and embed financial sustainability into Council's delivery of projects.

Action	Status	Evaluation comment
Year two 2024/25		
Determine key election priorities ahead of the next Federal Election, to seek commitments from candidates.	Completed	<p>Council worked to deliver a bipartisan engagement with all parties as part of the formal election campaign. This included the development of prospectus documents, designed for distribution to candidates across the electorates, with Council's key priorities. These priorities were a range of City-shaping infrastructure projects that aimed to enhance the liveability of our City. They were derived from the prioritisation matrix's process of ranking priorities.</p> <p>As part of our proactive efforts to support understanding around elections in the community, and Council's guiding principle to be apolitical, Council offered candidates the opportunity to answer a questionnaire relating to our priorities. Their responses were placed on Council's advocacy website and shared via social media.</p>
Continue implementation of Advocacy Strategy by using framework and matrix to guide advocacy priorities, efforts and actions.	Ongoing	Council has undertaken a process of ranking projects and policies, as per the Advocacy Strategy's prioritisation matrix. As new projects were identified, through Notices of Motion, or funding gaps within Council Budget projects, Council continued to prioritise these, for inclusion within Budget Bid documents, and State and Federal Election campaigns.
Engage with State representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Engage with Federal representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24

Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Identify and support application of State and Federal grants to support delivery of infrastructure and services.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the Municipal Association of Victoria by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the National Growth Areas Alliance by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24

Action	Status	Evaluation comment
Year three 2025/26		
Determine key election priorities ahead of the 2026 State Election, to seek commitments from candidates.	Progressing	Council is progressing its campaign for the Victorian State Election, expected to be held in November 2026. Guided by the ranked priorities, Council has developed a list of election priorities, which will be taken to State representatives under the campaign of 'A Way Forward for Wyndham.'
Continue implementation of Advocacy Strategy by using framework and matrix to guide advocacy priorities, efforts and actions.	Ongoing	See Year Two 2024/25
Engage with State representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Engage with Federal representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24

Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Identify and support application of State and Federal grants to support delivery of infrastructure and services.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the Municipal Association of Victoria by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the National Growth Areas Alliance by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24
Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.	Ongoing	See Year One 2023/24

Action	Status	Evaluation comment
Year four 2026/27 – Original Advocacy Strategy was reduced from a Four Year Strategy to a Three Year Strategy		
Conduct a stakeholder sentiment survey to understand perceptions, experience and effectiveness of Council’s advocacy efforts.		
Continue implementation of Advocacy Strategy by using framework and matrix to guide advocacy priorities, efforts and actions.		
Engage with State representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.		
Engage with Federal representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.		
Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.		
Identify and support application of State and Federal grants to support delivery of infrastructure and services.		

Take an active role in the strategic direction of the Municipal Association of Victoria by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.		
Take an active role in the strategic direction of the National Growth Areas Alliance by actively participating in events, opportunities, and putting forward priorities.		
Engage with State representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.		
Engage with Federal representatives bi-monthly, to discuss shared issues and opportunities to seek positive outcomes.		
Make submissions to State and Federal Budgets incorporating projects and initiatives that will support the creation of a more liveable City.		